



Visitors take photos of themselves with the "Charging Bull" sculpture in Wall Street's financial district in New York. This week marks the 25th anniversary of the installation of Arturo Di Modica's 1989 work. The Dow Jones industrial average had its biggest surge in three years Thursday, rising sharply for a second day. The gains Thursday were led by technology stocks as Oracle soared following better-than-expected earnings.

(AP Photo/Bebeto Matthews)

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THE VOYAGE 12H BAG – THE REGINAL BOOT

Top Islamic militants killed; more US troops going to Iraq

LOLITA C. BALDOR
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Two senior Islamic State group leaders were killed in U.S. and coalition airstrikes in northern Iraq over the last week, U.S. officials said Thursday, as Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel approved new orders for several hundred troops to deploy to Iraq to train Iraqi forces. According to one of the U.S. officials, airstrikes killed a key deputy of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of the Islamic State militants, and one of al-Baghdadi's military chiefs. A third militant, described as a mid-level leader, was also killed.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the identification details publicly.

Words of the deaths came after Hagel signed orders Wednesday for the first group of U.S. troops to go to Iraq as part of the administration's recent decision to



U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel wears body armor as he steps off a helicopter at Baghdad International Airport. Two senior Islamic State group leaders were killed in U.S. and coalition airstrikes in northern Iraq, U.S. officials said Thursday, as Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel approved new orders for several hundred troops to deploy to Iraq to train Iraqi forces.

(AP Photo/Mark Wilson, Pool)

deploy 1,500 more American forces to the country. The troops are to advise and train Iraqi forces.

The top U.S. commander for the mission in Iraq and Syria said Thursday the next wave of American troops

will begin moving into Iraq in a couple of weeks, and cautioned that it will take at least three years to build

the capabilities of the Iraqi military.

Army Lt. Gen. James Terry, who is leading the U.S. campaign to defeat Islamic State militants in Syria and Iraq, said the challenge is to get Iraqi units trained and back into the fight so they can plan operations to regain contested areas such as Mosul.

He said that while there has been progress in halting the militants' charge across Iraq, "I think what we must do, especially inside of Iraq, is continue to build those (Iraqi) capabilities. I think you're at least talking a minimum of three years."

The Iraqi army wants to launch a counteroffensive to retake Mosul, the largest city in northern Iraq, and the U.S. probably would help. While there have been some concerns that Iraq's military may not be ready yet for such an ambitious operation, Hagel said last week that the U.S. is working with senior Iraqi leaders on preparations. □

Obama signs legislation ending US benefit checks for Nazis

**RICHARD LARDNER
DAVID RISING
RANDY HERSCHAFT
Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama on Thursday capped a swift and forceful response to an Associated Press investigation by signing into law a measure that bars suspected Nazi war criminals from receiving U.S. government pension benefits, known as Social Security.

AP's investigation, which was the impetus for the No Social Security for Nazis Act, found that dozens of former Nazis collected millions of dollars in retirement benefits after being forced to leave the United States. Recipients ranged from the SS guards who patrolled the Third Reich's network of camps where millions of Jews died

to a rocket scientist who helped develop the V-2 rocket that Nazi Germany used to attack London.

The speed with which the legislation moved underscored the outrage AP's findings triggered among lawmakers in Congress — and American taxpayers. The House unanimously approved the bill Dec. 2 and the Senate passed it by voice vote just two days later.

Mike King, a Vietnam veteran and a retired police officer, gets a Social Security check of \$900 a month. That's less than half of what he could be getting based on his years in the workforce. But his benefits are reduced because of a rule that docks retirees who simultaneously collect a public pension. It's "appalling," he said, that



President Barack Obama speaks in the Roosevelt Room of the White House in Washington. Obama on Thursday capped a swift and forceful response to an Associated Press investigation by signing into law a measure that bars suspected Nazi war criminals from receiving U.S. Social Security benefits.
(AP Photo/Jacquelyn Martin)

former Nazis collected benefits when he and others in

his position are forced to accept less.

"It is a slap in the face, not only to every American citizen but to every American veteran," King said.

The bill signed into law by Obama terminates Social Security payments for individuals stripped of their American citizenships due to their participation in Nazi persecutions during World War II. U.S. law previously mandated a higher threshold — a final order of deportation — before a person's Social Security benefits could be terminated.

By lowering the threshold to loss of citizenship, a step known as denaturalization, the bill effectively shuts a loophole that for years had allowed suspected Nazis to continue receiving benefits even after being expelled from the U.S. for their roles in Third Reich's atrocities.

AP found that since 1979 at least 38 of 66 suspects removed from the United States kept their Social Security benefits. Many of these former Nazis got in to the U.S. after the war by lying about their pasts and eventually became U.S. citizens. □

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White House waives sanctions authority despite new law

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama signed legislation Thursday authorizing new sanctions on Russia but said he does not plan to impose the penalties outlined in the measure.

White House officials have said Obama has concerns that the measure was not in line with his policy of enacting sanctions in tandem with the European Union. The U.S. and Europe have sought to present a united front against Russia over Moscow's provocations in Ukraine.

"Signing this legislation does not signal a change in the administration's sanctions policy, which we have carefully calibrated

in accordance with developments on the ground and coordinated with our allies and partners," Obama said in a statement. He added that he could use the authorities included in the measure "if circumstances warranted."

The legislation required the president to impose penalties on a Russian state-owned arms dealer and other defense companies, but it also gave him the ability to waive the penalties.

White Houses sometimes chafe at congressionally-mandated sanctions because revoking the penalties requires legislative action. □



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US: Uganda-based man counterfeited \$2M in cash

JOE MANDAK
Associated Press

PITTSBURGH (AP) — U.S. authorities charged a man Thursday with leading a multimillion-dollar international counterfeit money operation based in Uganda and shipping bogus bills to the United States.

Ryan Andrew Gustafson was charged with conspiracy to commit offenses against the United States and counterfeiting acts committed outside the U.S., authorities said.

Gustafson was arrested Dec. 11 in Uganda, and investigators said they seized sophisticated printers and other equipment used to make the high-quality fake \$20, \$50 and \$100 bills. Authorities said he made more than \$2 million in U.S. currency, most of it passed in Uganda, but about \$270,000 of which was shipped to the United States.

Ugandan and U.S. authorities said they also found counterfeit Euros, Indian rupees and currency from Uganda, Congo and Ghana when Gustafson was arrested.

The scheme unraveled when a fake \$100 bill passed at a Pittsburgh coffee shop last December



U.S. Attorney David Hickton, right, and Eric Zahren, the special agent-in-charge of Pittsburgh's U.S. Secret Service office, talk about the investigation and arrest of Ryan Andrew Gustafson, during a news conference, Thursday, Dec. 18, 2014, in Pittsburgh. (AP Photo/Keth Srakocic)

was detected by bank employees, authorities said. Hickton and Eric Zahren, the special agent-in-charge of Pittsburgh's U.S. Secret Service office, said investigators traced that bill to a Pittsburgh man and further investigation determined Gustafson was shipping the bills to others in Florida, Minnesota, Texas and Washington. They said about \$30,000 in counterfeit bills was passed in the

Pittsburgh area. Hickton and Zahren didn't say who in Pittsburgh received the money, but he's identified by the initials J.G. in the Gustafson complaint and as Joseph Graziano Jr. in court documents relating to two pending fraud cases. No attorney or address was listed for Gustafson in court records. Graziano's attorney, Martin Dietz, declined to comment. Hickton said

Gustafson will be returned to the U.S. after Ugandan officials prosecute him on counterfeiting charges.

The Gustafson complaint said he offered the counterfeit money for sale on encrypted Internet forums. Graziano is accused in one transaction of sending Gustafson \$1,500 in real currency in exchange for \$4,000 worth of fake bills.

The money was glued inside charitable Save the

Children pamphlets, and, investigators contend, Gustafson used a pair of rubber gloves modeled after his own hands to prepare the packages so he would not leave fingerprints. Despite that, Zahren said, Gustafson was tied to one of the packages by a fingerprint. The money shipments also were sent through a series of unidentified people who relayed them through the mail. □

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Tsarnaev lawyer says he plans to seek trial delay

DENISE LAVOIE

AP Legal Affairs Writer

BOSTON (AP) — Boston Marathon bombing suspect Dzhokhar Tsarnaev returned to court Thursday for the first time since he was arraigned in July 2013, and he received a shout of encouragement from the mother-in-law of a man who was shot and killed while being questioned by law enforcement after the bombings. Security was tight at the federal courthouse in Boston for Tsarnaev's final pre-trial conference.

Even before the hearing began, tensions ran high. Outside the courthouse, a man who lost his right leg in the bombings had a tensity exchange with a small group of protesters holding signs supporting Tsarnaev and questioning whether authorities have proof that he is responsible for the bombings.

Marc Fucarile held up his prosthetic leg and moved it back and forth toward the demonstrators, saying: "That's proof right there."

One of the demonstrators said to Fucarile: "You should care that they get the right



In this courtroom sketch, Boston Marathon bombing suspect Dzhokhar Tsarnaev is depicted sitting in federal court in Boston Thursday, Dec. 18, 2014, for a final hearing before his trial begins in January. Tsarnaev is charged with the April 2013 attack that killed three people and injured more than 260. He could face the death penalty if convicted. (AP Photo/Jane Flavell Collins)

guy."

Fucarile replied: "Get a life, lady. Go to work."

Three people were killed and more than 260 were injured when two bombs exploded near the finish line of the April 2013 marathon. Tsarnaev, who has plead-

ed not guilty to 30 federal charges, faces the possibility of the death penalty if he is convicted.

During the brief court hearing, U.S. District Court George O'Toole Jr. made no rulings, saying he would rule in writing on pending

motions, including the defense's latest push to move the trial out of Boston.

David Bruck, one of Tsarnaev's lawyers, told the judge that the defense plans to file a motion to delay the trial, which is now scheduled to begin on Jan.

5 with jury selection. Bruck did not say how long of a delay the defense will seek. The mother-in-law of Ibragim Todashev called out to Tsarnaev in Russian in the courtroom. Elena Teyer said she told him: "We pray for you. Be strong, my son. We know you are innocent." Later, in English, she yelled to the law enforcement officers escorting her out of the room: "Stop killing innocent people. Stop killing innocent boys." Tsarnaev never flinched or acknowledged the shouts. Tsarnaev, 21, wore a black sweater and gray trousers and had a scruffy beard and a curly hairstyle similar to the one seen in earlier photos. He smiled to his attorneys and one patted him on the arm.

The courtroom was packed with FBI agents, police who worked on the case and more than a dozen survivors and family members.

At his last court appearance 17 months ago, Tsarnaev still bore signs of the bloody standoff with police that led to his capture and the death of his older brother, Tamerlan. □

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Sheriff to halt immigrant ID theft squad

JACQUES BILLEAUD

Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — An Arizona sheriff known for arresting hundreds of immigrants in the country illegally on charges of finding work using fake or stolen identities is planning to close the controversial squad that investigates such cases. Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio's decision to disband the criminal employment squad will end his last major foothold in immigration enforcement after the courts and federal government have gradually reined in his powers in recent years.

Since 2008, Arpaio has raided 83 businesses, leading to more than 700 immigrants being charged with using fake or stolen IDs to get jobs. The raids have been criticized as focusing too heavily on the workers instead of employers.

"Here is guy who abused these laws and twisted

them in such a sick way to do it for political gain. But I am glad that the reign over immigrants is over," said Lydia Guzman, a civil rights advocate who documented many of Arpaio's business raids and immigration patrols.

The agency didn't immediately respond to a request for comment Thursday morning.

The sheriff's office announced the squad's planned closure late Wednesday as part of a legal challenge to the immigrant ID-theft cases. The squad will close in January or February after it completes an investigation.

A memo by a sheriff's official said the agency will be voluntarily halting its work-related ID theft enforcement and that the decision was made after the courts have shelved certain Arizona immigration laws.

The ID theft laws were part of a package of legislation

that sought to confront employers who hire immigrants in the country illegally. Only one employer has been criminally charged in those investigations.

But the immigrants arrested for ID theft typically plead guilty to a felony, frequently face deportation and are unable to re-enter the U.S. legally.

Arpaio's immigration powers have dwindled as the federal government curtailed his authority or courts struck down several Arizona laws seeking to confront illegal immigration.

In late 2009, Washington stripped some of his deputies of their power to make federal immigration arrests. The restrictions continued when a judge ruled in May 2013 that Arpaio's office had systematically racially profiled Latinos in regular traffic and special immigration patrols. Arpaio vigorously denies the court's conclusions. □

Slain German teen's parents testify about US ordeal

LISA BAUMANN
Associated Press

MISSOULA, Montana (AP)

— The parents of a German exchange student who was shot to death by a man while trespassing in his garage in Montana told a judge Thursday their dreams are broken.

Celal and Gulcin Dede testified about the impact of their 17-year-old son's

problems right now," Celal Dede said through a Turkish translator.

Kaarma tried unsuccessfully to use Montana's "stand your ground" self-defense law to avoid conviction. More than 30 U.S. states have such laws expanding the right of people to use deadly force to protect their homes or themselves. They expanded

ma's Feb. 12 sentencing. Kaarma could face between 10 years and 100 years in prison. His lawyers plan to appeal.

The shooting sparked an outcry in Germany, where the government followed it closely. Hamburg prosecutor Carsten Rinio said this week his office was investigating the Dede case, as required under German

way. Diren's mother told the court she would never forget the phone call telling her Diren was dead.

"I wanted to kiss him and hug him ... but could only kiss his cold body," Gulcin Dede said through the translator.

She said Diren was a well-behaved child who became a leader, respected and loved by his family and friends.

"How a human can survive and continue her life without part of her heart," she said. "We are trying to do that. I'm happy because Diren was a good boy and people loved him."

Kaarma, handcuffed and wearing an orange jail suit, mostly looked at the floor while the Dedes spoke. Afterward, he gave a rushed statement, telling the court he never intended to hurt anyone that night and that it was a terrible time for his own family.

"I can't even imagine the pain you feel," he said to the Dedes. "If I could go back in time and change it, I would. I'm sorry for the loss of Diren."

Kaarma's "castle doctrine" defense, which allows people to use deadly force to protect their home and family, failed him after prosecutors argued Kaarma hoped to bait an intruder by leaving his garage door partially open and placing a purse inside.

Kaarma told several hairstylists before the shooting that he had been waiting up to shoot some kids who were burglarizing homes. He said they would see it on the news. □



Gulcin and Celal Dede embrace after Markus Kaarma was found guilty of deliberate homicide in Missoula County District Court in Missoula, Mont., in the shooting death of their son Diren Dede, a foreign exchange student from Germany who trespassed in to Kaarma's garage last spring.

(AP Photo/The Missoulian, Michael Gallacher)

death, saying they've been unable to work or plan for the future. A judge will consider their comments when sentencing Markus Kaarma, who was convicted of deliberate homicide Wednesday in Diren Dede's killing.

"Our whole family in Hamburg, Germany and in Turkey are all broken and most have psychological

on the self-defense principle known as the castle doctrine is a centuries-old premise that a person has the right to defend their home against attack. The name evokes the old saying, "My home is my castle."

Prosecutors requested Thursday's hearing so the Dedes wouldn't have to return to Montana for Kaar-

law.

Kaarma shot Diren Dede in the early hours of April 27 after being alerted to an intruder by motion sensors. Witnesses testified Kaarma fired four shotgun blasts at the teen, who was unarmed. Celal Dede said his son never meant to come to the United States to do anything bad, and he didn't deserve to die that



Emma Czornobaj appears at the Montreal Courthouse in Montreal. Czornobaj, who caused a fatal traffic accident after stopping her car to help ducks on a busy highway, was sentenced Thursday, Dec. 18, 2014, to 90 days in prison and a 10-year driving ban.

(AP Photo/Graham Hughes.)

Canada woman stops for ducks; sentenced in 2 traffic fatalities

MONTREAL (AP) — A Canadian woman who caused a fatal traffic accident after stopping her car to help ducks on a busy highway was sentenced Thursday to 90 days in prison and a 10-year driving ban.

Emma Czornobaj was convicted by a jury on two counts of criminal negligence for causing death and two counts of dangerous driving causing death. The 25-year-old was charged in the deaths of Andre Roy, 50, and his daughter Jessie, 16.

The sentence, handed down in Montreal, also prohibits her from driving for 10 years and stipulates she must do 240 hours of community service.

After Czornobaj stopped her car in June 2010 to rescue ducklings on the side of a Montreal highway, a motorcycle carrying the victims slammed into her vehicle.

Czornobaj's lawyer, Marc Labelle, said he likely wouldn't appeal the 90-day sentence. Her defense team argued she should only get the community service.

Pauline Volikakis, the wife and mother of the victims, said the family was hoping for a significant sentence and got it. □

Judge: Slender Man stabbing defendants competent

TODD RICHMOND
Associated Press

WAUKESHA, Wisconsin (AP)

— Two girls accused of stabbing a classmate to please the fantasy web character Slender Man are fit to stand trial, a judge ruled Thursday.

Prosecutors have charged both girls with attempted first-degree intentional homicide in the attack in May. They say the girls plotted for months to kill classmate Payton Leutner,

luring her to a wooded park after a sleepover and stabbing her 19 times. After her attackers left, Leutner crawled through the woods to a sidewalk where a bicyclist found her and called for help.

State experts concluded that both girls were competent, but their attorneys contested those conclusions. Waukesha County Circuit Judge Michael Bohren held back-to-back hearings for both girls Thurs-

day to decide.

Bohren's decisions mean both cases will continue to preliminary hearings, where a judge will decide whether there's enough evidence for trial.

The two girls charged in the case were found walking toward a national forest where they said they believed Slender Man lived in a mansion. They told investigators they believed killing Leutner would curry favor with the figure.

All three girls were 12 at the time of the incident. The first girl that Bohren found competent Thursday has since turned 13.

Wisconsin law requires suspects who are at least 10 years old to be charged as adults in severe crimes. The Associated Press isn't naming either defendant because their attorneys have said they may still try to move their cases into juvenile court, where proceedings are secret. □



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Dutch Cabinet crisis deepens

MIKE CORDER
Associated Press
THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — The Netherlands' prime minister has canceled plans to attend a European summit in Brussels in order to focus his full attention on a domestic political spat that is threatening to cause the collapse of his 2-year-old governing coalition.

The crisis was precipitated by the failure of a health care reform law to pass the upper house of parliament, where Mark Rutte's conservative VVD party and left-leaning junior coalition partner Labor lack a majority.

Several Labor senators declined to pass the law, which would restrict patients' choice of doctors to those approved by their insurance companies. The VVD believes the measure is vital to restrain rising health care costs.

The coalition has been an uneasy partnership from the start because of ideological differences, but both parties have slumped in the polls since taking office and wouldn't relish new elections early next year. Anti-Islam lawmaker Geert Wilders' Freedom Party leads in polls.

Separate from the Cabinet crisis, prosecutors in The Hague announced Thursday they plan to press hate speech charges against Wilders for remarks including a chant at a postelection rally in which he asked his supporters whether they wanted more or fewer Moroccans in the Netherlands. The announcement marked the second time Wilders has faced charges linked to his anti-immigrant and anti-Islam rhetoric. He was acquitted of similar charges in 2011. □

Putin:

West wants to defang, declaw Russian bear

LAURA MILLS
V. ISACHENKOV
Associated Press
MOSCOW (AP) — Sternly warning the West it cannot defang the metaphorical Russian bear, a confident-looking President Vladimir Putin promised Thursday to shore up the plummeting ruble and revive the economy within two years.

While he issued a litany of sharp rebukes against the West, Putin struck a conciliatory note on Ukraine, saying that the rebellious east should remain part of the country, backing a quick exchange of war prisoners and praising his Ukrainian counterpart.

The mixture of blistering anti-Western rhetoric and constructive signals appeared to indicate that Putin is eager to negotiate a face-saving solution to the Ukrainian crisis, but has no intention of conceding defeat in his standoff with the West. In his first public appearance since the crash of the ruble's value this week, Putin accepted responsibility for the economic crisis. He said Western sanctions accounted for at least 25 percent of the ruble's fall, but the main reason was Russia's failure to ease its overwhelming dependence on oil and gas exports.

In his speech, the man who has led Russia for 15 years sought to soothe market fears, saying the country has sufficient currency reserves and would not resort to administrative controls, such as fixing exchange rates or obliging exporters to sell non-Russian currency.

Following Putin's performance, the Russian currency traded between 60 and 62 rubles to the dollar, roughly the same level

as late Wednesday, when it rallied 12 percent after plummeting to a historic low of 80 rubles per dollar. The currency has lost about half its value since January. In Brussels, the EU beefed up its sanctions against Russia with a ban Thursday on investment in Crimea

Western sanctions could rebel against him in a "palace coup." He cited strong public support.

An Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll released Thursday backed up that view, recording his approval rating among Russians at 81

and buy Western currencies or durable goods in an attempt to protect the value of their savings.

Audi was the latest major company to suspend deliveries in Russia amid the ruble's turmoil. Apple halted online sales earlier this week.



Russian President Vladimir Putin gestures as he speaks during his annual news conference in Moscow, Russia, Thursday, Dec. 18, 2014. Putin says Russia has sufficient currency reserves and that the ruble will recover.
(AP Photo/Pavel Golovkin)

and other economic penalties, including measures aimed at keeping tourists away.

Putin shrugged off speculation that some members of his inner circle hurt by

percent, a level far above typical ratings for world leaders. The poll was conducted before the ruble's slump this week, which spurred many Russians to withdraw bank deposits

If the Kremlin fails to stabilize the ruble soon, panic could spread, triggering an even more massive run on banks and a sharp surge in inflation that could swiftly erode Putin's support. □



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Botched cyberattack on Syria group blamed on IS

RAPHAEL SATTER
Associated Press

LONDON (AP)—A botched cyberattack aimed at unmasking Syrian dissidents has experts worried that the Islamic State group is adding malicious software to its arsenal.

Internet watchdog Citizen Lab says an attempt to hack into systems operated by dissidents within the self-styled caliphate could be the work of hackers affiliated with the Islamic State group.

Citizen Lab analyst John Scott-Railton said there is circumstantial evidence of

the group's involvement, and cautioned that if the group has moved into cyberespionage, "the targets might not stop with the borders of Syria."

The Nov. 24 attack came in the form of a booby-trapped email sent to an activist collective in Raqqa, Syria, that documents human rights abuses in the Islamic State group's de-facto capital. The activist at the receiving end of the email wasn't fooled and forwarded the message to Bahaa Nasr of Cyber Arabs, a project which provides online security training.

"We are wanted — even just as corpses," the activist, whose name is being withheld to protect his safety, told Nasr. "This email has a virus; we want to know the source."

The message eventually found its way to Citizen Lab, based at the University of Toronto's Munk School of Global Affairs. There, Scott-Railton and malware researcher Seth Hardy determined that it could act as a kind of electronic homing beacon by revealing a victim's Internet Protocol address.

Citizen Lab regularly dis-

sects rogue programs from the region, but Scott-Railton said this sample was different from previous attacks blamed on the Syrian government.

"We think we are looking at a different actor," he said — an opinion echoed by malware scientist Thoudique Haq at California-based FireEye, who wasn't involved in the report.

The activists are convinced the "different actor" is the Islamic State group, whose supporters have publicly vowed to hunt the collective down.

Islamic State has previ-

ously expressed interest in electronic surveillance. Last week, a post to a pro-Islamic State forum carried a proposal for a project named "Eye of the Caliphate" that would task a team of computer experts with hacking into the caliphate's enemies, according to the SITE Intelligence Group. British news media reported this year that Islamic State had recruited a British hacker.

Attempts to reach an Islamic State representative were unsuccessful. U.K. authorities have declined comment. □

Suspected Islamic extremists kidnap 185 in Nigeria

Associated Press

MAIDUGURI, Nigeria (AP)—Islamic extremists killed 35 people and kidnapped at least 185 in an attack near the town where nearly 300 schoolgirls were taken hostage in April, witnesses said Thursday.

In Sunday night's attack on the village of Gumburi, most of the kidnapped were young women, children and members of a civilian defense group fighting Boko Haram, according to residents, a security official and a local government officer. Teenager Aji Ibrahim said he was lucky to escape into the bushes. "No doubt they were Boko Haram members because they were chanting 'Allahu akbar' (God is great) while shooting at people and torching houses," he told



Martha Mark, the mother of kidnapped school girl Monica Mark cries as she displays her photo, in the family house, in Chibok, Nigeria. Islamic extremists killed 35 people and kidnapped at least 185, fleeing residents said Thursday of an attack near the town where nearly 300 schoolgirls were taken hostage in April. Teenager Aji Ibrahim said he was lucky to escape into the bushes. "No doubt they were Boko Haram members because they were chanting "Allahu akbar" (God is Great) while shooting at people and torching houses," he told The Associated Press.

(AP Photo/Sunday Alamba)

The Associated Press. News of the attack took days to emerge because the militants have destroyed communications towers and people walked for days to avoid areas under extremist control.

Gumburi is 20 kilometers (12 miles) from Chibok, the northeastern town where extremists kidnapped 276 schoolgirls in April. Dozens of the students escaped that attack, but 219 remain missing.

The militants have kidnapped hundreds of people, but the mass kidnappings of the girls from a boarding school attracted international outrage and condemnation of Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan and his military for their failure to rescue the hostages. □

Zambian officials call for president's ouster amid turmoil

ALAN COWELL

© 2014 New York Times

LONDON - In a deepening crisis that has raised questions about his country's political future, Guy Scott, the acting president of Zambia and Africa's only white leader, is fighting a revolt within his Cabinet before elections next month. Scott assumed the interim presidency after former President Michael Sata died in October, and he has confronted a struggle for power in recent weeks

in the governing Patriotic Front. The dispute sharpened Wednesday when the foreign minister, Harry Kalaba, called on Scott to resign. Kalaba is among 14 out of 17 Cabinet ministers calling for the ouster of Scott, who is seeking to oversee a transition to elections on Jan. 20, news reports said.

In response, Scott refused to quit, saying in a statement quoted by Reuters: "I will not be blackmailed to allow the illegal use of gov-

ernment resources for partisan interests. I will abide by the law." He accused his adversaries of trying to hold an unlawful cabinet meeting, representing a "serious act of treason," and insisted that he would remain in office to ensure a smooth transfer of power.

Scott - a Zambian citizen and former farmer who, as Sata's deputy in the Patriotic Front, was the country's vice president - is not permitted to run in next month's elections because

his parents were born outside the country. A faction loyal to him, however, is supporting Miles Sampa, a nephew of Sata's, as its candidate.

An opposing group has coalesced around the defense minister, Edgar Lungu. The two sides have made rival claims to represent the Patriotic Front.

News reports said the Zambian High Court, which earlier ruled in favor of Lungu, was to meet Thursday to consider Sampa's claim to

be the Patriotic Front's lawful presidential contender. The increasingly tense standoff in Zambia, a landlocked, copper-rich nation, has contributed to a sense of regional turmoil in recent weeks as President Robert G. Mugabe of neighboring Zimbabwe purged his party and elevated his wife, Grace Mugabe, to high office. Mugabe, 90, Africa's autocratic oldest statesman, also replaced his former vice president, Joice Mujuru, with Emmer-



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EU leaders agree to fund for jumpstarting growth

JOHN DAHLBURG
Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — European Union leaders agreed Thursday to create a strategic investment fund that could generate up to 315 billion euros (\$386 billion) in private- and public-sector money to upgrade infrastructure, jumpstart the EU's sluggish economies and ignite job growth. "The economic situation has improved ... but we are not safe yet," said EU President Donald Tusk. "Today, we need more investment, more structural reforms and sound public finances across Europe."

The plan approved by leaders of the 28-nation EU at their one-day summit meeting in Brussels calls for the new European Fund for Strategic Investments to be in operation and approving new investment projects by mid-2015. The plan, which calls for use of EU seed money to leverage up to 15 times more in private funds, is the brainchild of European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker. Critics have already warned that despite its multi-

billion euro price tag, it may not be big enough to win over wary investors.

"This package looks like creative accounting for the moment," Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaite said as she arrived for the summit.

Grybauskaite and the other EU leaders seemed to acknowledge the possibility that private companies may be reluctant to risk their capital by noting in a summit communique that the strategic fund will accept contributions from EU member states. For the fund to launch, it would also require approval for European legislators.

European Parliament President Martin Schulz, in a speech prepared for delivery at the summit, said the EU must stimulate and modernize its economy, or risk falling farther behind global competitors like the U.S. and China.

Schulz said investment in areas like schools, universities, green energy and infrastructure was key "if we want Europe to be an economic champion in the future."

German Chancellor Angela



French President Francois Hollande, right, speaks with the media as he arrives for an EU summit in Brussels on Thursday, Dec. 18, 2014. European Union leaders agreed Thursday to create a strategic investment fund that could generate up to 315 billion euros (\$386 billion) in private- and public-sector money to upgrade infrastructure, jumpstart the EU's sluggish economies and ignite job growth. (AP Photo/Virginia Mayo)

Merkel said investments fostered by the strategic fund "must go into projects for

the future — particularly, for example, in the digital economy or where we aren't so

good on the world market as we should be: electromobility (electric cars) and the like." □

Palestinian leader supports more discussions on UN bid

KARIN LAUB
Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas said Thursday that he supports further negotiations on a proposed U.N. Security Council resolution that sets a 2017 deadline for an Israeli withdrawal from war-won lands the Palestinians seek for their state.

His comments indicated that he is trying to avoid a clash with Washington at the council.

The Arab-backed draft, submitted by Jordan on Wednesday, sets aside

one year for Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and two more years for implementing a deal. The Palestinians seek a state in the West Bank, Gaza and east Jerusalem, lands Israel captured in 1967.

The resolution is unlikely to face an immediate vote, U.S. State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki said Thursday.

Abbas said Thursday that "we will continue in our consultations with the brothers and friends through deliberations, which will take place in the United Nations." □



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Colombia's government rebuffs rebel truce

LIBARDO CARDONA
Associated Press
BOGOTA, Colombia (AP)

Colombia's U.S.-backed military, a condition that appears to doom the gesture due to civilian lives every year and is fueled by the smuggling of cocaine and other crimi-

five decades of U.S embargo, indicating major progress toward ending another Cold War conflict. Analysts saw the timing as a coincidence.

"The FARC proposal responds to a totally different, Colombian, dynamic," said Adam Isacson at the Washington Office on Latin America think tank.

The FARC gesture comes as both sides try to recommit themselves to talks that were almost derailed following the capture last month of an army general, the highest-ranking officer ever held by the FARC.

Santos briefly suspended negotiations, but the crisis was overcome after the FARC freed the general two weeks later.

The two sides already have reached agreements on agrarian reform, political participation for the FARC and how to jointly combat illicit drugs in what was long the world's largest cocaine producer.

But some of the thorniest issues remain unresolved, including how the FARC would lay down its arms and whether commanders would face prosecution for atrocities and drug trafficking.

Thousands of Colombians, led by still-powerful former President Alvaro Uribe, marched over the weekend in major cities to reject any amnesty that would allow rebel leaders to escape justice for killings, kidnappings and drug trafficking. □

Congressman of Brazil charged for rape comments

STAN LEHMAN
Associated Press

SAO PAULO (AP) — A male lawmaker has been charged with incitement to rape for public comments he made about a female colleague on the floor of Brazil's Congress and repeated in a news interview, the Attorney General's Office said this week. The office's website reported that Deputy Attorney General Ela Wiecko filed the charges against Congressman Jair Bolsonaro this week for "for publicly inciting the crime of rape." Bolsonaro said last week in Congress that Representative Maria do Rosario, who had previously presided over the National Human Rights Council, had called him a "rapist" in 2003, but he would not rape her because she didn't "deserve it."

"His words encourage men to rape women they feel deserve to be raped," Wiecko was quoted as saying on the website.

Bolsonaro told The Associated Press by telephone he won't retract the comment, which he said was made in the heat of the moment over having been called a rapist.

Lawmakers in Brazil enjoy parliamentary immunity, which protects their speech, opinions and votes. However, the immunity would not apply to Bolsonaro because he made similar remarks later in an interview with a newsmagazine.

The press section of the Attorney General's office said Bolsonaro could be stripped of his seat if he is found guilty of violating congressional ethics rules. Last week, Atila Roque, who heads the Brazil branch of Amnesty International, said Bolsonaro "crossed the line of what is acceptable."

"This particular congressman already has long been a provocateur, particularly in the areas of sexual rights, of women, of the LGBT population, of people who stand for other values. □



Opponents to the government's peace talks with guerrillas of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, FARC, shout slogans during a march coined "Peace Without Impunity" in Bogotá, Colombia.

(AP Photo/Fernando Vergara)

— Colombia's government on Thursday rebuffed a unilateral truce declared by the country's largest rebel group, saying the guerrillas' conditions are unacceptable until a peace deal is reached.

The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia on Wednesday said it would lay down its weapons for an unlimited period to bolster peace talks that have been held in Cuba for the past two years.

But Latin America's oldest and strongest insurgency also said it would call off the cease-fire if its units were attacked by Colom-

to the government's long-standing refusal to enter a bilateral truce out of fear it would give the rebels an opportunity to rearm.

President Juan Manuel Santos said he couldn't accept the rebels' demand the truce be verified by several Latin American nations and by the international Red Cross. Such outside verification would have to wait until a deal to end hostilities is reached, he said in a statement.

Still, Santos said he values the rebels' gesture as a way to begin de-escalating a half-century-old conflict that still claims hundreds of

nal activity.

It's unclear where the government's response leaves the cease-fire, which is set to take effect midnight Saturday.

Although the rebel army known as the FARC has declared temporary cease-fires before, around Christmas and elections, this is the first time since the 1980s it has offered to indefinitely lay down its weapons nationwide.

The FARC's announcement in Havana came on the same day that the Cuban and U.S. governments announced they would restore diplomatic ties after

Bermuda prepares to welcome its first casinos

JOSH BALL
Associated Press
HAMILTON, Bermuda (AP)

— Bermuda's Senate this week approved a heavily debated measure that would allow the tiny, wealthy British territory to build its first casinos.

The bill caps the number of casinos at three, and it calls for all of them to be located inside hotels to help revive the island's sluggish tourism and construction industries.

A St. Regis resort that would

feature a casino is planned for the St. George's area as part of a \$120 million development.

Other high-end resorts also have expressed interest in similar projects, especially with the 35th America's Cup coming to Bermuda in June 2017.

Bermuda had initially planned to hold a referendum on whether to allow casinos but scrapped the idea last year in favor of filing the bill that was approved after a 10-hour de-

bate.

Opponents say they worry that casinos could attract prostitution and lead to violence.

"It is the saddest day of my career in politics," said Wayne Furbert, an economic development minister. "Why can't we structure our island around something that is more wholesome?"

Legislators expect to file additional bills early next year to help regulate the island's fledgling casino industry,

with speculation that only hotel guests would be allowed to play.

Tourism Minister Shaun Crockwell said the bill's approval represents a "significant and critical adjustment."

"In the past 30 years, Bermuda has moved from a tourism industry leader to an industry outsider," he said.

Bermuda's Lower House approved the bill on Saturday, and the governor is expected to sign it. □



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Loyal Visitors Honored at the Marriott Surf Club



PALM BEACH - Recently the Aruba Tourism Authority had the great pleasure of honoring a group of loyal and friendly Visitors of Aruba, at the Marriott Surf Club as Distinguished Visitors. The symbolic honorary titles are presented in the name of the Minister of Tourism as

a token of appreciation to guests who visit Aruba for 10-to-19 consecutive years. The honorees were Mrs. Marsha Watts from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Mr. Anthony and Mrs. Veronica Desposito from Long Beach, New York. The honorees

are loyal members of the Marriott Surf Club and they love Aruba very much because of the friendly people, the climate, beaches, restaurants, relaxation and being on Aruba and staying at the Surf Club

is like being home for them. The certificates were presented by Mr. Ernest Giel representing the Aruba Tourism Authority together with Ms. Jenny Boekhoudt representing the Marriott Surf Club. □



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Aruba chosen as 'One Happy Island' for 1 Millionth Time: Renaissance Resort Receives Aruba's 1 Millionth Stay-Over Visitor



ORANJESTAD, Aruba- December 2014: Aruba is once again in the international spotlight; receiving its 1 millionth stay-over. Of course Renaissance Aruba will be celebrating this glorious moment seeing that the visitor will also be staying at the resort. "The 1 millionth stay-over visitor can not go unnoticed; we

are sharing this milestone with the entire community. The fact that they chose to stay at the resort during their vacation on the island is an even bigger satisfaction. They are staying in our newly renovated rooms. We wish them an unforgettable experience." this according to General Manager of Renaissance Aruba

Resort & Casino Mr. Paul Gielen. "We are welcoming our guest and Aruba's 1 millionth visitor, Mrs. Hakri-Nina Dhaliwal and we wish her a pleasant stay at the resort", Mr. Gielen continued. Upon arrival Mrs. Dhaliwal was welcomed with flowers and she also received a bottle of champagne in her room to celebrate the special occasion.

Mrs. Dhaliwal whom is a social worker and works with children of special needs is visiting Aruba together with her partner Mr. Tung Vicrumdeep whom is a

doctor. The couple is very thankful to Aruba for this acknowledgment and will be staying for 5 nights. They are looking forward to a great and relaxing experience. Mrs. Dhaliwal had no idea she was the 1 millionth visitor when she arrived in Aruba, so this was a great surprise and a moment of joy for the couple.

On pictures an impression of the moment when Mrs. Hakri-Nina Dhaliwal arrived

at the Renaissance Aruba Resort & Casino and was welcomed by the general manager of Renaissance Aruba Resort & Casino, Mr. Paul Gielen accompanied by the always caring personnel of Renaissance Aruba Resort. Congratulations Aruba, with your 1 millionth stay-over visitors.

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At Salt & Pepper Restaurant: **Pancakes for Michelle and Jim Kraus from Mona, Utah**

PALM BEACH - Jim and Michelle Kraus have been coming to Aruba for many years. They found out about the awesome breakfasts at Salt & Pepper Restaurant when walking by the Arawak Garden across from the Occidental Resort one day. They stepped in, ordered the pancakes and they were sold. The couple from Mona, Utah, now comes in for breakfast every day of their annual holiday. Michelle and Jim have become close friends of Sharon Brown, one of the great waitresses at Salt & Pepper, and of Audrey. Everyone at Salt & Pepper is happy to welcome this lovely couple back to the island, so that is why they are put in the spotlight. Photo shows Sharon Brown enjoying a hug from her friends Michelle and Jim. □



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Musafir.com UAE Royals Novak Djokovic returns a ball to Mircromax Indian Aces player Roger Federer during the International Premier Tennis League, in New Delhi, India, Monday, Dec. 8, 2014.

Associated Press

Djokovic, Williams get top ITF annual awards

LONDON (AP) — Novak Djokovic and Serena Williams have been selected as the International Tennis Federation's world champions for 2014.

Djokovic won the annual award for a fourth time, while Williams claimed it for a fifth time.

Djokovic won Wimbledon for his seventh Grand Slam

title and reclaimed the No. 1 ranking. Williams won the U.S. Open for her 18th major championship and stayed No. 1 throughout the year.

Bob and Mike Bryan won the men's doubles award for the 11th time in 12 years, while Sara Errani and Ro-

berta Vinci of Italy took the women's prize for the third straight time.

CiCi Bellis of the United States and Russia's Andrey Rublev were named junior world champions. Japan's Yui Kamiji and Shingo Kunieda are the wheelchair champions. □

Track coach Jon Drummond gets 8-year doping ban

EDDIE PELLIS

AP National Writer

DENVER (AP) — During an angst-filled summer of 2012, track coach Jon Drummond and his ailing star sprinter, Tyson Gay, wrestled with whether Gay should use a mysterious medicine that might help him run pain-free at the London Olympics.

Eventually, Gay used it and got caught — but it was Drummond who took the biggest fall.

The former U.S. track star and longtime coach got hit with an eight-year doping ban Wednesday after arbitrators found a series of discussions concluded with Drummond convincing Gay to take the banned substance, and carrying it to Europe for him.

In addition to coaching Gay, Drummond, 46, also served as relay coach for the U.S. track team at the London Olympics and as chairman of the athletes' advisory committee for USA Track and Field.

"Coaches have an inherent responsibility to protect athletes — not take advantage of them — but to ensure that they receive the support, training and advice they need to win fairly and in accordance with the rules," said Travis Tygart, CEO of the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency, which announced the suspension.

Gay received a one-year

ban last year for testing positive for a steroid precursor DHEA — a penalty that was reduced by a year because he provided information that led to USADA's case against Drummond. Drummond did not immediately respond to an email and text message seeking comment. Messages were also left by The Associated Press seeking comment from Drummond's attorney, Mark Whitburn.

A 23-page summary of the case details the trip Drummond and Gay took to Atlanta to meet Dr. Clayton Gibson in June 2012, shortly after Gay competed in the 100-meter U.S. Olympic trials and complained he could not run pain-free. Gay had had surgery on his ailing right hip the year before.

"He wanted to run pain-free. And we were just talking and I said, 'Well, the only thing we've got left is Dr. Gibson,'" Drummond is quoted as telling investigators.

At Gibson's office, Drummond and Gay were shown creams, the labels on which said "Testosterone/DHEA," "HGH" and "Progesterone Cream," according to the testimony. Gibson assured Drummond and Gay that, despite the labeling, the creams were all natural and there was no way they could test positive using them. □

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Vonn considering dropping slalom from repertoire

JEROME PUGMIRE
AP Sports Writer

VAL D'ISERE, France (AP)

— Lindsey Vonn's days of competing in all five ski disciplines may be behind her, since the four-time overall World Cup champion is seriously considering giving up slalom in her comeback from a career-threatening knee injury.

The 30-year-old American racer thinks she is still somewhat off the pace in speed events, despite clinching her first victory in nearly two years in a downhill at Lake Louise, Canada, on Dec. 7.

The 2010 Olympic downhill champion thinks ditching slalom may help her cause to become the No. 1 speed racer again.

"I definitely plan on doing (giant slalom), but I want to focus on the speed races right now," Vonn said on Thursday ahead of a downhill and super-G in the French resort of Val d'Isere. "I don't know if I'll do slalom again. It's difficult starting in the back. But we'll see. I haven't skied slalom since my injuries, so I don't know how it feels yet."

Vonn's previous World Cup victory was in GS on Jan. 26, 2013, in Maribor, Slovenia, and she has raced only seven races since.

Less than two months after that win, she injured her right knee in a heavy fall at the world championships.

Desperate to get back in time for the Sochi Games, she partially tore one of the reconstructed ligaments in a training crash in Copper Mountain, Colorado.

Again, she attempted to grind things out, only to sprain her MCL racing downhill in Val d'Isere last

December, and had a second surgery a month later.

"I'm in a much different position this year than I was last year," Vonn said. "I have a healthy knee finally. So I'm looking forward to the races this weekend and hopefully the conditions will be good."

It has been a big month. Racing downhill for the first time since hurting her knee again in Val d'Isere, Vonn finished eighth at Lake Louise and grabbed a second-place finish in super-G to go with her downhill triumph.

"I wasn't expecting to be as fast as I was in Lake Louise. The first race, being eighth place was about what I expected," she said. "But I learned a lot from the first race and tried to improve, and both the second downhill and the super-G were good performances."

Still, she thinks she can do much better.

"I'm trying to be more comfortable with the speed and to be more aggressive. Downhill is a little bit farther along than super-G, and I definitely need more training. This weekend, hopefully I'll have good results like I did in Lake Louise. But it's a process, coming back from two years of injury takes a bit of time."

Vonn last raced slalom at Maribor, the day after her GS win, and the last time she scored points was when finishing eighth at Schladming, Austria, in March 2012.

Although she did not finish her three slalom races before Schladming, she had previously shown good form in the discipline: Winning two races and securing three other podium finishes over a calendar

year from November 2008-2009.

Her reluctance to race slalom again is good news for World Cup leader Tina Maze.

The 2013 overall champion competes in all five events, and the Slovenian heads into Val d'Isere in superb form after winning a GS and placing second in slalom at the Swedish resort of Are last weekend. "It's fun to change disciplines and try to be in front in each," Maze said.

She leads overall with 560 points from Austria's Anna Fenninger on 303, while Vonn is eighth with 212. □



Lindsey Vonn, of the United States, smiles in the interview area after her second place finish at the women's World Cup Super-G ski race in Lake Louise, Alberta, Sunday, Dec. 7, 2014.
Associated Press

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Thursday	Free Slot Tournament \$625 in cash prizes Tournament starts at 8pm — Registration at 6pm Must accumulate 25 points during the week to be eligible
Friday	Santa's Crazy Cash \$800 in cash prizes The more you play the more chances you have! For every 25 points earned during the week redeem your ticket for Santa's Crazy Cash First drawing starts at 9pm
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Cleveland Cavaliers' LeBron James (23) goes in for a shot over Atlanta Hawks' Dennis Schroder (17), from Germany, during the first quarter of an NBA basketball game Wednesday, Dec. 17, 2014, in Cleveland. Associated Press

NBA Capsules

Hawks rout Cavs for 11th win in 12 games

The Associated Press

CLEVELAND (AP) — Shelvin Mack scored a career-high 24 points and the Atlanta Hawks routed the Cleveland Cavaliers 127-98 Wednesday night for their 11th victory in 12 games. Mack, a reserve guard who came in averaging 3.8 points, made all six of his 3-pointers as the Hawks went 16 for 28 from behind the arc. Trailing 50-38 mid-

way through the second quarter, Atlanta outscored Cleveland 89-48 the rest of the way and sent the Cavaliers to their largest loss of the season.

The Hawks, playing without leading scorer Jeff Teague, avenged a 127-94 loss in Cleveland on Nov. 15, when the Cavaliers made their first 11 shots from 3-point range.

LeBron James scored 21 points but didn't play in the fourth quarter. The Cavaliers have lost three of four since winning eight straight. Al Horford scored 20 points for Atlanta, which had seven players in double figures and shot 64.5 percent from the field.

GRIZZLIES 117, SPURS 116, 3OT

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — Marc Gasol scored 26 points, including a banked-in 3-pointer as regulation expired, and Memphis outlasted San Antonio in triple overtime after blowing a 23-point lead.

Zach Randolph had 21 points and 21 rebounds in the Grizzlies' sixth straight victory. Vince Carter added a season-high 18 points for Memphis (21-4).

Danny Green scored 25 points, and Tim Duncan had 23 points and 16 rebounds for San Antonio. His jumper rattled in to force the third OT, but he finished just 5 for 15 on free throws. Manu Ginobili added 21 points, but shot an airball on a 3-pointer in the final seconds for the Spurs. San Antonio made a season-high 17 3-pointers but was 13 for 27 on free throws, including 5 for 15 by Duncan.

Duncan hit a fallaway, high-arching jumper that bounced on the rim three times before dropping in to tie the game at 111 at the close of the second overtime.

RAPTORS 105, NETS 89

TORONTO (AP) — Kyle Lowry had 20 points and 12 assists, Jonas Valanciunas added 16 points and 10 rebounds, and Toronto used a big fourth quarter to beat Brooklyn.

Amir Johnson and Patrick Patterson each scored 13 in the first meeting between the teams since Brooklyn's one-point win in Game 7 of the first round of the playoffs last May.

Patterson and Lou Williams each scored eight points in the fourth as Toronto outscored the Nets 29-16, taking advantage of six Brooklyn turnovers.

Mason Plumlee had a career-high 23 points for the Nets, who made only five of 13 field goal attempts and five of 13 free throws in the fourth.

Toronto, which leads the Eastern Conference at 20-6, reached 20 wins before Christmas for the first time in its 20-year history.

ROCKETS 115, NUGGETS 111, OT

DENVER (AP) — James Harden scored 41 points, including eight in overtime, and Houston beat Denver after Arron Afflalo tied the game on a buzzer-beating 3-pointer at the end of regulation.

Patrick Beverley sealed Houston's seventh win in eight games by hitting four straight free throws in the final 17.8 seconds.



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Eriksson OT goal gives Bruins win at Wild

The Associated Press

ST. PAUL, Minnesota (AP) — Loui Eriksson's goal 1:30 into overtime gave Boston a 3-2 win over Minnesota on Wednesday night, only the second victory for the Bruins in eight games and the fourth loss for the Wild in the past six.

Carl Soderberg, who set up the winner with a cross-crease pass in front of Wild defenseman Marco Scandella, scored early for the Bruins along with Patrice Bergeron.

Jason Pominville tied the game in the third period, and Kyle Brodziak also had a goal for the Wild, but Niklas Backstrom was beaten in the net for the second straight night.

He stopped 22 shots.

Niklas Svedberg made 35 saves for the Bruins in just his second start in 11 games. He relieved Tuukka Rask, who lost in a shootout on

Tuesday at Nashville.

The Wild dropped to 12-2-2 against the Bruins.

SENATORS 2, DEVILS 0

NEWARK, N.J. (AP) — Craig Anderson made 34 saves, and Kyle Turris scored two goals as Ottawa blanked New Jersey.

Anderson earned his third shutout of the season and 29th in his NHL career. He had struggled recently, going 2-6-2 in his previous 10 starts. New Senators coach Dave Cameron improved to 2-1-1 since he replaced the fired Paul MacLean.

The Devils, whose losing streak was extended to five games, went 0 for 5 on the power play — stymied by Anderson throughout.

Turris gave the Senators a 1-0 lead with a power-play goal 2:47 in on Ottawa's first shot of the game.

Turris was off balance as he deflected Erik Karlsson's point shot past Cory Sch-

neider for his first goal in 11 games.

He added an empty-net goal in the final second of the game.

STARS 2, CANUCKS 0

VANCOUVER, British Columbia (AP) — Kari Lehtonen made 27 saves for his second shutout this season and the 29th of his career as Dallas extended Vancouver's losing streak to five games.

Colton Sceviour and Antoine Roussel, into an empty net, scored for the Stars. Eddie Lack stopped 27 shots for Vancouver.

Lack started for the first time since Dec. 7 in place of No. 1 goalie Ryan Miller, who gave up five goals on 23 shots in a 5-1 loss to the New York Rangers on Saturday.

Lehtonen has four wins this month but came in with a 3.10 goals-against average on the season. □



Vancouver Canucks' Derek Dorsett (51) and Dallas Stars' Jyrki Jokipakka, of Finland, collide during the second period of an NHL hockey game Wednesday, Dec. 17, 2014, in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Associated Press

Warriors' Bogut out long term after blood therapy

ANTONIO GONZALEZ

AP Basketball Writer

OAKLAND, California (AP)

— Just as they have the

past two seasons, the Golden State Warriors will have to get by without Australian center Andrew Bogut for



Golden State Warriors' Andrew Bogut hangs on the rim after scoring against the New Orleans Pelicans during the second half of an NBA basketball game Thursday, Dec. 4, 2014, in Oakland, Calif. At right is New Orleans' Tyreke Evans (1).

Associated Press.

an undetermined amount of time.

Bogut was out indefinitely after undergoing platelet-rich plasma therapy on his ailing right knee, the Warriors announced on Thursday.

They said Bogut consulted with the team's medical staff and his personal physician from Australia before deciding on the treatment. "We fully support Andrew in his decision to undergo the PRP treatment," Warriors general manager Bob Myers said in a statement. "Our number one concern is that Andrew is 100 percent healthy, and we will continue to support him in any way we can to make that happen."

The 7-foot (2.14-me-

ter) Bogut missed his fifth straight game when the Warriors hosted Oklahoma City on Thursday. He is averaging 7.1 points, 9.3 rebounds, three assists, and 2.2 blocks and has played a key role in helping the Warriors get off to an NBA-best 21-3 start.

Bogut is the anchor of Golden State's smothering defense, though his seasons have often been derailed by injuries, including the past two years.

The Warriors originally said Bogut had tendinitis before listing it as knee chondromalacia and bone edema. The injury causes bone marrow to swell and absorb fluid, and can be extremely painful.

Bogut said before Golden

State's loss at Memphis on Tuesday — which ended the team's franchise-record 16-game winning streak — that he hadn't felt any improvement since leaving during the game against Minnesota on Dec. 8. He also had his knee drained last week.

In PRP therapy, blood is drawn and placed in a centrifuge that spins it to separate the platelet-rich plasma. The platelets, which release growth factors for tissue healing, are re-injected into the injured joints and muscles.

Golden State's Andre Iguodala underwent PRP treatment on his right knee in the offseason and said he came back stronger. Houston Rockets All-Star c □

Column: Thaw in U.S.-Cuba relations warms up MLB

JIM LITKE

AP Sports Columnist

If one ripple from the thaw in U.S.-Cuba relations means baseball prospects get off the island and into the major leagues without payoffs to smugglers and threats from kidnappers, it's hard to see the downside. Just don't expect too much, too soon. Barely two hours after President Barack Obama's dramatic announcement Wednesday in Washington, both MLB and its players' union acknowledged as much in statements.

"We will keep our clubs informed if this different direction may impact the manner in which they conduct business on issues related to Cuba," MLB said.

"We remain hopeful that today's announcement will lead to further positive developments," the union said.

Let's hope so, considering how few positive developments have occurred before now. There were 25 Cuban-born players in the big leagues this past season, the best of which is arguably Los Angeles Dodgers star Yasiel Puig. The story of how he finally got there, after four failed attempts to leave Cuba, involved a boat trip, a detour where he was held hostage in a Mexican motel room, repeated extortion threats and crossing the U.S. border illegally.

On Tuesday, South Florida businessman Gilberto Suarez pleaded guilty for his



In this Sept. 2, 2014, file photo, Boston Red Sox's Yoenis Cespedes, right, watches an RBI double off New York Yankees starting pitcher Shane Greene in a baseball game at Yankee Stadium in New York. . Twenty-five Cuban-born players appeared in the major leagues this year, a group that includes outfielders Yasiel Puig, left, and Yoenys Cespedes, and hard-throwing reliever Aroldis Chapman. Fred Claire can see the day when Major League Baseball teams open academies for prospects in Cuba. "It's absolutely a natural, just as the Dominican was and Venezuela. You go to where the talent is," the former Los Angeles Dodgers general manager said Wednesday, Dec. 17, 2014. "The high talent level for Cuban players is still there." Associated Press



role in the conspiracy to smuggle Puig out in return for a sizable cut of his multi-million-dollar salary.

Suarez was the second man this year to enter a guilty plea related to the smuggling of a Cuban baseball player into the U.S. Last month, 41-year-old Eliezer Lazo was sentenced to 14 years in federal prison for conspiring to smuggle 1,000 Cubans, among them Texas Rangers outfielder Leonys Martin. Sadly, stories like Puig's unsavory and sometimes life-threatening journey differs from so many others only in the details.

Cuba has been turning out world-class athletes — and not just ballplayers — for more than a century. But since the 1959 revolution,

most have stayed put.

Track stars and multiple medalists such as Alberto Juantorena and Javier Sotomayor took star turns on the Olympic stage, but never reaped rewards that were commensurate with their talents. So, too, did heavyweights Teofilo Stevenson and Felix Savon, two of only three boxers to win gold medals at three Olympics and considered among the greatest amateurs ever. But neither turned pro.

Stevenson was so smooth that a fight against Muhammad Ali was often hyped and loudly debated when both were near their prime, but never came off. And some boxing observers think Savon, who succeeded Stevenson, was definitely

ly the better of the two.

But baseball was the stage where Cuba's athletes shined brightest. Its version of the Big Red Machine dominated the international scene from the 1940s on, even as team officials thinned out the ranks for potential defectors and conducted bed checks with a zealotry the Cuban army would have admired.

But after back-to-back gold medals in Barcelona (1992) and Atlanta (1996) — and a raft of defections in spite of the dangers — the cupboard was nearly empty. The team Cuba brought to Sydney for the 2000 Games was largely the same it had sent to the previous two Olympics, as well as every important

international competition in between. It was old by any measure and only three players on the squad were under 25 at the time — young enough to make the risk seem worthwhile. Around the same time, half-brothers and defectors Livan and Orlando "El Duque" Hernandez were pitching for the Giants and Yankees in preparation for the major league playoffs a month down the road.

That Cuban team lost the gold-medal game 4-0 to a U.S. team composed largely of young pro prospects and aging castoffs, and only so much has changed since.

Many of the best players, such as Puig, Jose Fernandez and Jose Abreu, still find ways to escape.

Drug supplier pleads guilty in MLB doping case

CURT ANDERSON

AP Legal Affairs Writer

MIAMI (AP) — A man who admitted working as a black market chemist at a garage lab in his suburban home pleaded guilty on Thursday to being the main supplier of banned performance-enhancing substances in Major League Baseball's most recent steroid scandal.

Paulo Berejuk, a 51-year-old Brazilian citizen with permanent U.S. residency, pleaded guilty to con-

spiracy to distribute testosterone. Investigators said Berejuk was the key source of the substance for Anthony Bosch, who ran the now-closed Biogenesis of America clinic that provided steroids to MLB players and other athletes.

Berejuk faces a reduced prison sentence of two to three years on Feb. 25 because he agreed to cooperate with prosecutors, but he also could be deported back to Brazil after prison. In addition, Berejuk agreed

to forfeit to the government a 32-foot (10-meter) Intrepid boat.

Defense attorney Robert Barrar said Berejuk has been helping prosecutors for months to build cases against others charged in the probe, and wanted to immediately take responsibility for his role.

"I believe in my heart this is what he wants to do because he recognizes he was wrong," Barrar told U.S. District Judge Cecilia M. Altonaga.

Berejuk admitted in a court document that from 2007 to 2013 he supplied 5,000 to 10,000 units of banned steroids to Bosch and others involved in the conspiracy, including the owner of another clinic, Jorge Velazquez. Berejuk was paid up to \$20,000 a month for his work.

The doping scandal resulted in suspensions last year for 14 MLB players, including a season-long suspension handed to New York Yankees star Alex Rodriguez.

According to court documents, Rodriguez admitted using steroids supplied by Bosch during an interview with U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration agents.

Several other people have already pleaded guilty, including Bosch and Velazquez. Another defendant, Juan Carlos Nunez, is scheduled to plead guilty on Friday. Still awaiting trial are Rodriguez's cousin, Yuri Sucart, and former University of Miami pitching coach Lazaro "Laser" Collazo.

Digital dilemma: How will US respond to Sony hack?

ERIC TUCKER

TAMI ABDOLLAH

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The detective work blaming North Korea for the Sony hacker break-in appears so far to be largely circumstantial, The Associated Press has learned. The dramatic conclusion of a Korean role is based on subtle clues in the hacking tools left behind and the involvement of at least one computer in Bolivia previously traced to other attacks blamed on the North Koreans.

Experts cautioned that hackers notoriously employ disinformation to throw investigators off their tracks, using borrowed tools, tampering with logs and inserting false references to language or nationality.

The hackers are believed to have been inside the network at Sony Pictures Entertainment Inc. since at least the spring, based on computer forensic evidence and traffic analysis, a person with knowledge of the investigation told the AP.

If the hackers hadn't made their presence known by making demands and destroying files, they probably would still be inside because there was no indication their presence was about to be detected, the person said. This person, who described the evidence as circumstantial, spoke only on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk openly about the case.

Still, the evidence has been considered conclusive enough that a U.S. official told the AP that federal investigators have now connected the Sony hacking to North Korea.

In public, White House spokesman Josh Earnest on Thursday declined to blame North Korea, saying he didn't want to get ahead of investigations by the Justice Department and the FBI. Earnest said evidence shows the hacking was carried out by a "sophisticated actor" with "malicious intent."

All this has led to a dilemma for the Obama administration: How and whether to



In this July 27, 2013 file photo, North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un waves to spectators and participants of a mass military parade celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Korean War armistice in Pyongyang, North Korea.

Associated Press

respond?

An earlier formal statement by the White House National Security Council also did not name North Korea but noted that "criminals and foreign countries regularly seek to gain access to government and private sector networks" and promised that, "we are considering a range of options in weighing a potential response." The U.S. official who cited North Korea spoke on condition of anonymity because that official was not authorized to openly discuss an ongoing criminal case.

U.S. options against North Korea are limited. The U.S. already has a trade embargo in place, and there is no appetite for military action. Even if investigators could identify and prosecute the individual hackers believed to be responsible, there's no guarantee any one of them who is overseas would ever face trial in a U.S. courtroom. Hacking back at North Korean targets by U.S. government experts could escalate the cyberconflict by encouraging further attacks against vulnerable American targets.

"We don't sell them anything, we don't buy anything from them and we don't have diplomatic relations," said William Reinsch, a former senior U.S. Commerce Department official

who was responsible for enforcing international sanctions against North Korea and other countries. "There aren't a lot of public options left."

Sony abruptly canceled the Dec. 25 release of its comedy, "The Interview," which the hackers had demanded partly because it included a scene depicting the assassination of North Korea's leader. Sony cited the hackers' threats of violence at movie theaters that planned to show the movie, although the Homeland Security Department said there was no credible intelligence of active plots. The hackers had been releasing onto the Internet huge amounts of highly sensitive — and sometimes embarrassing — confidential files they stole from inside Sony's computer network.

North Korea has publicly denied it was involved, though it has described the hack as a "righteous deed."

The episode is sure to cost Sony many millions of dollars, though the eventual damage is still anyone's guess. In addition to lost box-office revenue from the movie, the studio faces lawsuits by former employees angry over leaked Social Security numbers and other personal information. And there could be damage beyond the one com-

pany.

Sony's decision to pull the film has raised concerns that capitulating to criminals will encourage more hacking.

"By effectively yielding to aggressive acts of cyberterrorism by North Korea, that decision sets a troubling precedent that will only empower and embolden bad actors to use cyber as an offensive weapon even more aggressively in the future," said Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., who will soon become chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

McCain said the Obama administration had failed to control the use of cyber weapons by foreign governments, and he called the Sony case "the latest in a long and troubling list of attempts by malign actors to use cyber to undermine our economic and national security interests."

Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson said on MSNBC that the Obama administration wasn't ready to name the attacker but was "actively considering a range of options that we'll take in response to this attack."

Evidence pinning specific crimes on specific hackers is nearly always imprecise, and the Sony case is no exception.

Sony hired FireEye Inc.'s Mandiant forensics unit,

which last year published a landmark report with evidence accusing a Chinese Army organization, Unit 61398, of hacking into more than 140 companies over the years. In the current investigation, security professionals examined blueprints for the hacking tools discovered in Sony's network, the Korean language setting and time zone, and then traced other computers around the world used to help coordinate the break-in, according to the person with knowledge about the investigation.

Those computers were located in Singapore and Thailand, but a third in Bolivia had previously been traced to other attacks blamed on North Korea, the person told the AP. The tools in the Sony case included components to break into the company's network and subsequently erase all fingerprints by rendering the hard drive useless. "The Internet's a complicated place," said Adam Meyers, vice president of intelligence at CrowdStrike Inc., a security company that has investigated past attacks linked to North Korea. "We're talking about organizations that understand how to hide themselves, how to appear if they're coming from other places. To that end, they know that people are going to come looking for them. They throw things in the way to limit what you can do attribution on."

Another agreed. "If you have a thousand bad pieces of circumstantial evidence, that doesn't mean your case is strong," said Jeffrey Carr, chief executive of Taia Global Inc., which provides threat intelligence to companies and government agencies.

An FBI "flash" bulletin sent to some companies with details of the hacking software described it as "destructive malware, a disk wiper with network beacon capabilities." The FBI bulletin included instructions for companies to listen for telltale network traffic that would suggest they had been infected. □

Aer Lingus rejects bid by British Airways parent

SHAWN POGATCHNIK

Associated Press

DUBLIN (AP) — Irish airline Aer Lingus has rejected a takeover bid by the International Consolidated Airlines Group, the parent company of British Airways and Spain's Iberia. Shares in the Dublin-based carrier surged by as much as 21 percent Thursday amid rumors of a bid. Those gains were sharply pared after IAG issued a statement confirming its propos-

al had been rejected by the Aer Lingus board, but the stock still finished Dublin trading up 9 percent at a seven-year high of 1.99 euros (\$2.45).

Aer Lingus described the IAG offer as "preliminary, highly conditional and non-binding" and said it "fundamentally undervalues Aer Lingus and its attractive prospects."

No price details of Sunday's offer were disclosed. Aer Lingus rejected the offer

two days later.

Analysts long have seen IAG as a likely bidder for Aer Lingus. Its Irish chief executive, Willie Walsh, was previously chief executive of Aer Lingus before the formerly state-owned airline's 2006 privatization.

Aer Lingus operates a substantial European short-haul network and a half-dozen routes to the United States. In recent years it has struggled to compete with larger Dublin-based rival

Ryanair, which has mounted three failed takeover bids. Ryanair remains Aer Lingus' largest shareholder with a 30 percent stake, while the Irish government has retained 25 percent.

Abu Dhabi-based Etihad Airways has stoked speculation that it hopes to acquire Aer Lingus by building a 5 percent stake in the past two years and striking a code-sharing agreement.

Any successful bidder

would win coveted slots at Heathrow in London, the highest-demand airport in Europe. Aer Lingus holds the fourth largest number of slots at Heathrow, a strategic hub for trans-Atlantic travel.

Aer Lingus has struggled to record consistent profits since its flotation, hampered by frequent clashes with its unionized work force and unrelenting demands to reduce the deficit in its pension pot. □

Dow Jones sees biggest surge in three years

STEVE ROTHWELL

AP Markets Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The Dow Jones industrial average had its biggest surge in three years Thursday, rising sharply for a second day. The Federal Reserve set off the rally a day earlier by indicating that it was in no hurry to raise interest rates. The gains were led by technology stocks as Oracle soared following better-than-expected earnings. Industrial and health care stocks also logged big gains. Even the energy sector advanced, despite another drop in the price of oil.

Fed Chair Janet Yellen said Wednesday that she foresaw no rate hike in the first quarter of 2015. The comments eased concerns that policymakers would start raising interest rates at a time when growth outside the U.S. appears to be flagging. They also helped investors look past worries about the impact of a slumping oil price and

turmoil in Russia, where the currency has slumped.

"What we're seeing is a move back to fundamentals," said Karyn Cavanaugh, a senior market strategist at Voya Investment Management. "Earnings continue to be good...the U.S. economy is continuing to do well."

The Standard & Poor's 500 index rose 48.34 points, or 2.4 percent, to 2,061.23. The Dow Jones industrial average gained 421.28 points, also 2.4 percent, to 17,778.15. The Nasdaq Composite gained 104.08 points, or 2.2 percent, to 4,748.40. Oracle was the biggest gainer in the S&P 500 index after it reported earnings late Wednesday that beat the expectations of Wall Street analysts. The company said its software and cloud revenue grew 5 percent. The stock rose \$4.19, or 10.2 percent, to \$45.35. The company's advance helped push up the tech sector 3 percent. Investors are betting that as

the economy improves and unemployment continues to fall, companies will start to invest in technology to

it's probably about time it gets back in favor," said Jerry Braakman, chief investment officer of First

The price of oil fell \$2.36 to close at \$54.11 a barrel, after rising as high as \$58.71 in morning trading. Oil has



Traders work from handheld computers as they review stock information at the New York Stock Exchange during trading in New York. The Dow Jones industrial average had its biggest surge in three years Thursday, rising sharply for a second day. The gains Thursday were led by technology stocks as Oracle soared following better-than-expected earnings.

(AP Photo/Bebeto Matthews)

boost productivity.

"Oracle has been out of favor for some time, and

American Trust.

Stocks rose sharply Thursday even as oil resumed its slide.

plunged since June, when it peaked at \$107 a barrel. □

Kraft Foods CEO to retire; Cahill named successor

NORTHFIELD, ILL. (AP) — Kraft Foods Group Inc. says that CEO Tony Vernon plans to retire later this month. The company named Chairman John Cahill as his successor. Vernon has served as CEO since the consumer packaged food and beverage company's spinoff from Mondelez International Inc. in October 2012. Before that, he was the

company's executive vice president and president of Kraft Foods North America. Kraft's brands include Jell-O, Maxwell House, Oscar Mayer and its namesake, among others.

While Vernon plans to retire from the CEO post on Dec. 27, he will remain with the Northfield, Illinois-based company through March 31, 2015 as a senior advis-

er. He will also continue as a board member until the next annual meeting. Vernon will be 59 when he retires as a director.

"With the company on solid footing after the spin-off, the time is right for new leadership to fulfill our potential as the industry leader. The board and Tony agree that we need to accelerate the pace of change," Mackey

J. McDonald, lead independent director, said in a statement on Thursday.

Vernon said that he feels "now is the right time to step back and devote time to the one thing I love more than our brands_my family." Cahill, 57, previously served as chairman and CEO of The Pepsi Bottling Group Inc. He joined Kraft in January 2012 as Execu-

tive Chairman Designate of the North American grocery business. He became executive chairman at the company's spinoff and transitioned to a non-executive chairman role in March. Shares of Kraft Foods rose \$1.68, or 2.8 percent, to \$61.24 in morning trading after hitting a high for the year of \$61.47 earlier. □

Welcome Back, Cuba!



NICHOLAS KRISTOF

© 2014 New York Times

Is there any element of U.S. foreign policy that has failed more objectively than our embargo of Cuba?

When I hear hawks denouncing President Barack Obama for resolving to establish diplomatic relations with Cuba and ease the embargo,

I don't understand the logic. Is their argument that our policy didn't work for the first half-century but maybe will work after 100 years?

We probably helped keep the Castro regime in power by giving it a scapegoat for its economic and political failures. Look around the world, and the hard-line antique regimes that have survived - Cuba and North Korea - are those that have been isolated and sanctioned. Why do we think that isolating a regime is punishing it, rather than protecting it?

Few initiatives failed more catastrophically than the American-backed Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961. Yet while an armed invasion failed, I bet that we would have done better if we had permitted invasions of tourists, traders and investors.

American tourists in Havana are already asking plaintively why Wi-Fi is so scarce - or why the toilet paper is so rough. We need hordes of them, giggling at ancient cars held together with duct tape, or comparing salaries with Cubans.

Sometimes the power of weaponry fades next to the power of mockery.

When I was a law student in the early 1980s, I financed a visit to the Soviet Union by smuggling in bluejeans and Walkmans and selling them on the black market. My Russian customers regarded my goods with reverence, and me with jealousy.

The craving for cool consumer goods was perhaps as much a factor in the toppling of the Soviet empire as the yearning for voting rights.

Our economic embargo hurt ordinary Cubans, reducing their living standards, without damaging Cuban elites. The embargo kept alive the flames of leftism in Latin America, creating a rallying cry for anti-imperialists.

The United States, over the years, considered bizarre assassination plots against Fidel Castro, like an exploding seashell.

There were also proposals to humiliate him by drugging him with a hallucinogen, or using a depila-

tory to make his beard fall out. Our tax dollars at work.

Sen. Robert Menendez, a Cuban-American Democrat, objects that "President Obama's actions have vindicated the brutal behavior of the Cuban government."

Likewise, Sen. Marco Rubio, a Cuban-American Republican, denounces the approach as "based on an illusion, on a lie, the lie and the illusion that more commerce and access to money and goods will translate to political freedom for the Cuban people."

The critics are absolutely right that the Cuban regime is both oppressive and economically incompetent.

But wishing unpleasant governments away doesn't have a great track record.

My views are shaped by having lived in China for a time in the 1980s when the country was opening up to the West. Waves of foreign visitors were deeply unsettling to Chinese who believed in the system.

In 1983, a British friend of mine returned to his hotel to find his contact lenses missing from their case. He asked the hotel staff, and one cleaner explained proudly that he had washed out the contact lens case in the sink. An uproar followed. Soon all the Chinese staff in that hotel learned,

with wild surmise, that Westerners had access to tiny, invisible glasses that they could put on and take off.

They absorbed this with astonishment and envy.

Rubio is right that encounters with new technology and wealth are not immediately lethal to authoritarianism.

After all, the Chinese Communist Party is still solidly in place, and even imprisoning the great Nobel Peace Prize winner Liu Xiaobo.

Yet these encounters are if not lethal, at least corrosive. China has become less monolithic because of its interactions with the world. There's no political pluralism in China, but there is economic and cultural pluralism.

Maoist days are forever gone. Likewise, I'm struck how often North Korean defectors have told me that they had a change of heart simply by visiting China or Russia and seeing themselves patronized as backward.

During the North Korean famine in the 1990s, the government there tried to console the starving population with television programs about the dangers of overeating, including a documentary about a man who ate too much rice and exploded.

At the time, North Koreans would stare at the rare visiting foreigner, especially anyone a bit rotund, with a transparent range of emotions: jealousy, awe, and perhaps a bit of wariness in case of detonation.

So bravo for the new Cuba policy. Sending in gunmen to liberate the Bay of Pigs failed. Maybe we'll do better with swarms of diplomats, tourists and investors. Preferably plump. □



Why 2014 Is a Big Deal



THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN

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I was just about to go with a column that started like this: When they write the history of the global response to climate change, 2014 could well be seen as the moment when the balance between action and denial tipped decisively toward action. That's thanks to the convergence of four giant forces: São Paulo, Brazil, went dry; China and the United States together went green; solar panels went cheap; and Google and Apple went home. But before I could go further, the bottom fell out of the world oil price, and the energy economist Phil Verleger wrote me, saying: "Fracking is a technological breakthrough like the introduction of the PC. Low-cost producers such as the Saudis will respond to the threat of these increased supplies by holding prices down" - hoping the price falls below the cost of fracking and knocks some of those American frackers out. In the meantime, though, he added, sustained low prices for oil and gas would "retard" efforts to sell more climate-friendly, fuel-efficient vehicles that are helped by high oil prices and slow the shift to more climate-friendly electricity generation by wind and solar that is helped by high gas prices.

So I guess the lead I have to go with now is: When they write the history of the global response to climate change, 2014 surely would have been seen as the moment when the climate debate ended. Alas, though, world crude oil prices collapsed, making it less likely that the world will do what the International En-

ergy Agency recently told us we must: keep most of the world's proven oil and gas reserves in the ground. As the IEA warned, "no more than one-third of proven reserves of fossil fuels can be consumed prior to 2050" - otherwise we'll bust through the limit of a 2-degree Celsius rise in average temperature that scientists believe will unleash truly disruptive ice melt, sea level rise and weather extremes.

Technology is a cruel thing. The innovators who've made solar panels, wind power and batteries so efficient that they can now compete with coal and gas are the same innovators who are enabling us to extract oil and gas from places we never imagined we could go at prices we never imagined we would reach. Is a third lead sentence possible? There is. In fact, there is an amazing lead waiting to be written. It just takes the right political will. How so?

Let's go back to my first lead. The reason I thought we were decisively tipping toward action was, in part, because of news like this from the BBC on Nov. 7 in São Paulo: "In Brazil's biggest city, a record dry season and ever-increasing demand for water has led to a punishing drought." When a metropolitan region of 20 million people runs dry because of destruction of its natural forests and watersheds, plus an extreme weather event scientists believe was made more intense by climate change, denialism is just not an option.

Then you have the hugely important deal that President Barack Obama and President Xi Jinping of China struck on Nov. 12 under which the United States will reduce its carbon emissions 26 percent to 28 percent below 2005 levels by 2025, and China will peak its carbon emissions by or before 2030. China also committed to build by 2030 an additional 800 to 1,000 gigawatts of clean power - or nearly as much new renewable energy in China as all the electrical capacity in America today. That will greatly spur innovation in clean tech and help do for solar, wind and bat-

teries what China did for tennis shoes - really drive down global prices.

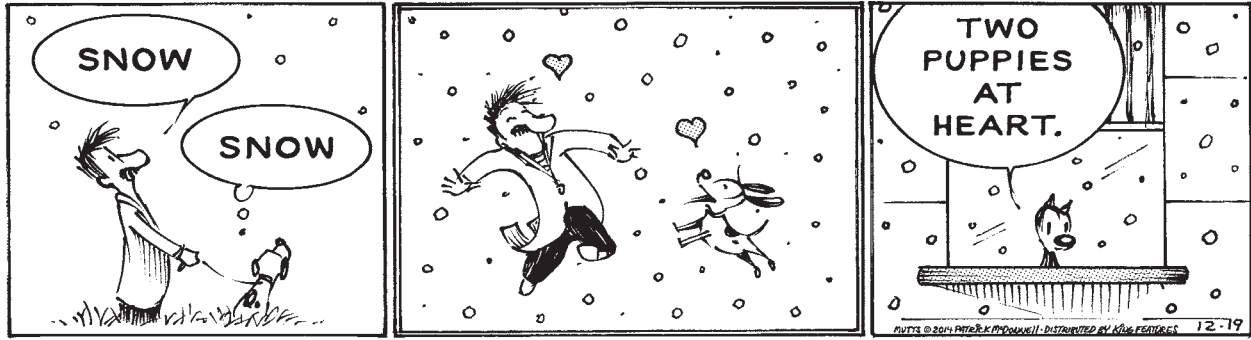
Also, in February, Google bought Nest, for \$3.2 billion. Nest makes a \$250 smart thermostat that can save homeowners tons of money by learning their temperature preferences and automatically managing their air-conditioners and home heating systems for the greatest efficiency. Also this year, Apple announced the development of the Apple HomeKit, which will enable customers to remotely manage their appliances and home energy systems on their iPhones. When Apple and Google start competing to make homes more energy efficient, watch out. We will likely see non-linear improvements.

But what if Verleger is right - that just as the cost of computing dropped following the introduction of the PC, fracking technology could flood the world with cheaper and cheaper oil, making it a barrier to reducing emissions? There is one way out of this dilemma. Let's make a hard political choice that's a win for the climate, our country and our kids: Raise the gasoline tax.

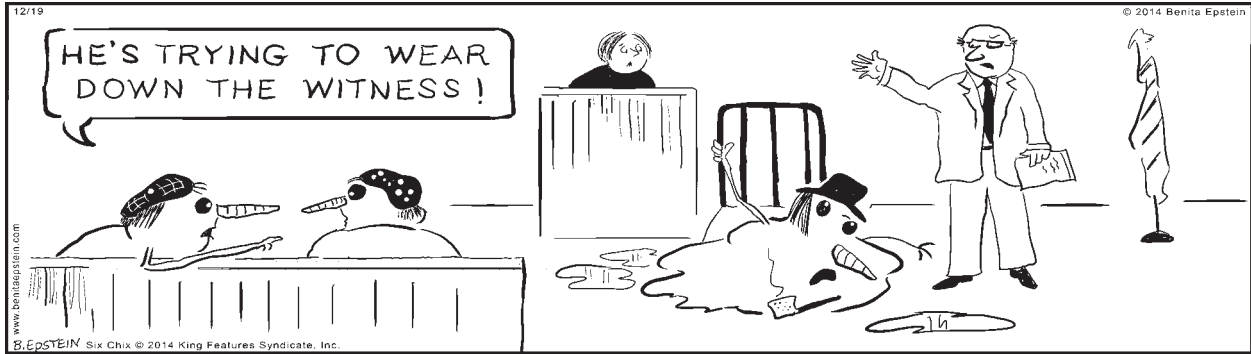
"U.S. roads are crumbling," Verleger said. "Infrastructure is collapsing. Our railroads are a joke." Meantime, gasoline prices at the pump are falling toward \$2.50 a gallon - which would be the lowest national average since 2009 - and consumers are rushing to buy SUVs and trucks. The "clear solution," said Verleger, is to set a price of, say, \$3.50 a gallon for gasoline in America, and then tax any price below that up to that level. Let the Europeans do their own version. "And then start spending the billions on infrastructure right now. At a tax of \$1 per gallon, the U.S. could raise around \$150 billion per year," he said. "The investment multiplier would give a further kick to the U.S. economy - and might even start Europe moving."

So there is a way to make 2014 that truly decisive year in confronting both climate and rebuilding America, but only our political leaders can write that lead. □

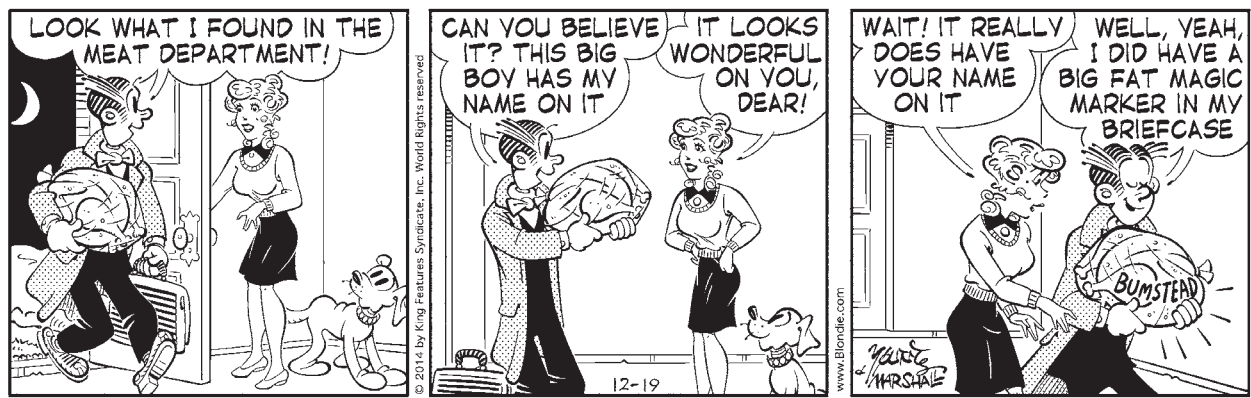
Mutts



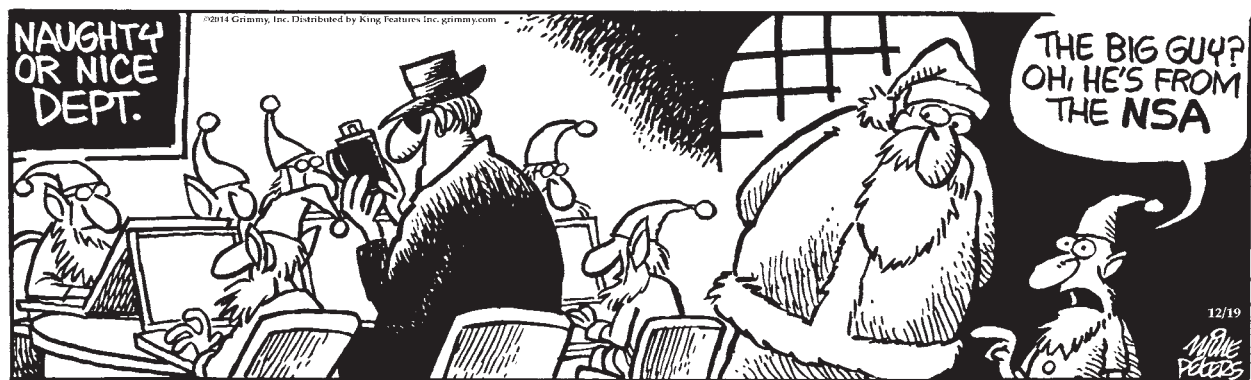
6 Chix



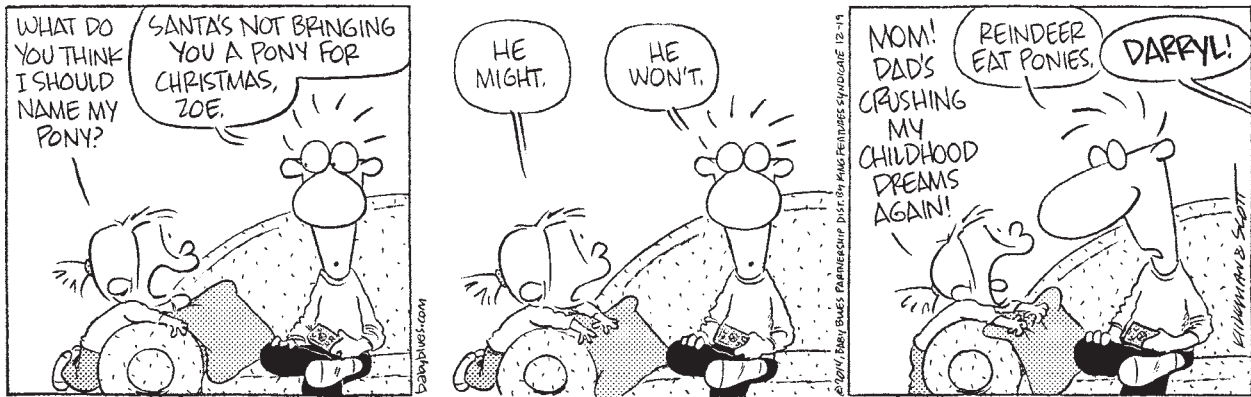
Blondie



Mother Goose & Grimm



Baby Blues



Zits



Conceptis Sudoku

			7	1			
3		9	5	8	6		2
	8					4	
6	5					8	9
4	9					3	7
	2					6	
7		8	3	5	1		4
			4	6			

Difficulty Level ★★★★★

12/19

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Sunday.

Yesterday's puzzle answer

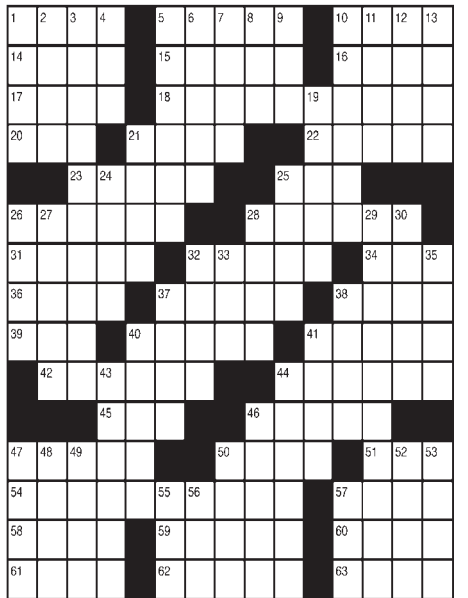
3	6	7	2	9	1	5	8	4
5	2	8	3	6	4	1	7	9
1	9	4	8	7	5	3	2	6
9	4	6	5	1	8	7	3	2
8	5	2	4	3	7	6	9	1
7	1	3	9	2	6	4	5	8
6	8	1	7	5	2	9	4	3
2	3	5	1	4	9	8	6	7
4	7	9	6	8	3	2	1	5

ACROSS

- 1 out; eradicate
5 Sprinkles at the table
10 up; support
14 TV's "American"
15 Cape
16 Impolite
17 Clutter
18 Scolds
20 Faux __; social blunder
21 Disturbs; jolts
22 Misfortune
23 Burst
25 __-tac-toe
26 Robards and Bateman
28 Became friends again
31 Follow as a result of
32 Beds for babies
34 Trawler's need
36 In a __; miffed
37 Simon & Reiser
38 Gush forth
39 Cheap metal
40 Reigned
41 Lively dance
42 Haughtiness
44 Under __; being coerced
45 Word of disgust
46 Terra __; patio pot material
47 Laziness
50 Apple products
51 Noticed
54 Entrepreneur
57 Daddy
58 Large kitchen appliance
59 "Same for me!"
60 Dollar bills
61 Orangy drink
62 Talk out of
63 " __ Wonderful Life"

Created by Jacqueline E. Mathews

12/19/14



Thursday's Puzzle Solved

OPTED	CHAD	CUSP
NOOSE	HIDE	ONTO
ELATE	ITSA	UFOS
SODAPOPS	CANINE	
TEAS	MOBSTER	
OGRESS	OUNCE	
WOE	TIERS	SLIMS
EYED	SAGES	SOAK
SAFES	GASES	WII
SIREN	RIVALS	
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MONROE	HUMILITY	
ALSO	CHIC	LITHE
LIEU	HONK	ASIAN
LOTS	OTTS	RESTS

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12/19/14

DOWN

- 1 Nebbish
2 New thought
3 Owning
4 Rail systems in some cities
5 Leftover bits
6 Warn
7 Cuts off
8 Paving goo
9 Zoom down
10 Walk about with liveliness
11 Ladder step
12 Probability
13 Pain in the neck
19 Housekeepers
21 Sixth month
24 Overwhelming victory
25 Keep __ on; watch closely
26 Joke around
27 " __ Get Your Gun"
28 Not at all spicy
29 Disagreeable
30 Quick looks
32 Peaceful
33 Regret
35 It was, to a poet
37 Shove

- 38 Categorize
40 Correct
41 __ up with; tolerates
43 Field trip
44 Physician
46 Social division in India
47 Edinburgh man
48 Etna's output
49 Unlock
50 Catcher's glove
52 Primates
53 "Fuzzy Wuzzy __ bear..."
55 Find a sum
56 Commit perjury
57 Luau dish

Not much chance of Congress ending new Cuba policy

DEB RIECHMANN
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A lack of unanimity in both political parties toward President Barack Obama's sudden move to re-establish ties with Cuba complicates any congressional effort to scuttle the most significant change in U.S. policy toward the communist island in 50-plus years. His initiative faces some strong resistance among lawmakers, with criticism coming mostly from Republicans, who say the new policy rewards Cuba's decades-long policies of repression, human rights abuses and aggression. Some prominent Democrats voiced opposition, too.

Opponents spoke of holding up money to set up a full-service U.S. embassy in Havana, blocking Obama's nominee as ambassador to Cuba or other such steps. But even if they were to pass sweeping legislation to stop what Obama wants to do, he could veto it and they are unlikely to muster the two-thirds majority to override a veto.

The Republicans will control both the Senate and House come Jan. 6, but they will face pressure from businesses and the farm industry — eyeing opportunities for commerce in Cuba — not to stand in the way of expanded ties.

The U.S. declared an embargo on most exports to Cuba in October 1960 and severed diplomatic relations in January 1961. Three months later Fidel Castro declared Cuba a socialist state — just a day before the doomed, U.S.-sponsored Bay of Pigs invasion meant to topple him. After Castro became ill in 2006, his brother, Raul, took charge of the nation, fewer than 100 miles (160 kilometers) off the southern coast of Florida.

Now Obama says he will ease economic and travel restrictions on Cuba and work with Congress to end the trade embargo.

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Study: large carnivores gaining ground in Europe

BERLIN (AP) — Brown bears, grey wolves and other large carnivores are making a comeback in Europe.

Scientists studying populations of bears, wolves, Eurasian lynx and wolverines found they have flourished on the continent, decades after being driven almost to extinction by hunting and the destruction of their habitat.

Surprisingly, the animals aren't just living in nature reserves or remote wilderness, but appear to co-exist in areas dominated by humans across a third of Europe's land mass, the authors wrote in their article published in the journal *Science* on Thursday.

The study found that Europe, excluding Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, "is succeeding in maintaining, and to some extent restoring, large carnivore populations on a continental scale" thanks in part to strong legal protection.

Denmark, Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands are the only continental countries to have no permanent breeding populations of at least one large carnivore.



In this photo taken Thursday, Dec. 18, 2014, a European wolf is pictured in a wildlife park in Hanau, Germany. **Associated Press**

Some 17,000 brown bears now inhabit much of Scandinavia, the Balkans and even parts of the Alps and the Pyrenees. About 12,000

wolves can be found in those areas, but packs have also established themselves in much of eastern Europe, parts of Germany, Italy, France and the Iberian peninsula. Eurasian lynx, who are thought to number about 9,000, are stable across Scandinavia and the mountainous regions of central and eastern Europe, while some 1,250 wolverines — a species that prefers cold climates — live in Scandinavia.

A relatively tolerant attitude toward large carnivores has also emerged in recent decades.

Guillaume Chapron, a researcher at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences and lead author of the study, cited the example of local herders in northwestern Spain who tolerate wolves killing mountain ponies because that keeps them from preying on more valuable cattle.

In Poland, wolves are considered a natural way of keeping deer and wild boar populations in check, while in Sweden and Croatia brown bears are hunted in a sustainable way, he said. □

2 astronauts will expand envelope with 1-year spaceflight



This photo combo provided by the Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Center via NASA, shows NASA astronaut Scott Kelly and Russian cosmonaut Mikhail Kornienko. **Associated Press**

MARCIA DUNN
AP Aerospace Writer
CAPE CANAVERAL, Florida (AP) — The two men assigned to a one-year spaceflight said Thursday that their upcoming mission will allow the world to push deeper into space. NASA astronaut Scott Kelly and Russian cosmo-

naut Mikhail Kornienko will rocket into orbit from Kazakhstan in March and move into the International Space Station for an entire year. For NASA, it will represent a space endurance record; for Russia, it will fall two months shy of its world record. At a news conference

Thursday at UNESCO headquarters in Paris, Kelly and Kornienko said they anticipate many scientific gains from their mission. Researchers need to know more about the prolonged effects of space on humans, before astronauts embark on Mars expeditions lasting three years, round trip, they said.

"What makes this exciting for me, this one-year flight, is about the science and everything we're going to learn from expanding the envelope on the space station," Kelly said. "If we're ever going to go to Mars someday, the International Space Station is really a great platform to learn much more about

having people live and work in space for longer durations. It's close to the Earth, and it's a great orbiting facility."

Kelly and Kornienko have been training for this mission since their selection two years ago. Both already have spent a half-year aboard the orbiting lab, on separate flights, and have been advised by previous yearlong space fliers to "pace yourself."

The 50-year-old Kelly, a former Navy fighter pilot, said his goals are the same as they are every time he flies in space: "No one gets hurt, we don't break anything and we leave as friends."

Kelly noted that his first

spaceflight, back in 1999, lasted eight days. At the time, it "seemed like that was a long time." His second flight, also on a space shuttle, lasted 13 days, and his space station visit in 2010 lasted 159 days.

"They're getting longer," he told reporters. "I think if I fly again," it just goes on forever "and I never come home."

Kornienko, 54, a former Soviet paratrooper, said the support of his family has helped him deal with the preparations and the flight itself.

He had exciting personal news for those tuning in: "You can congratulate me. I am becoming grandpa." □

Amazon-Hachette feud headlines book news in 2014

HILLEL ITALIE

AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Like a serial for the digital age, the book world's most dramatic story of 2014 unfolded in installments, often in real time. A dispute about e-book revenues between Amazon.com and Hachette Book Group led to Amazon's removing buy buttons, cutting discounts and reducing orders for works ranging from J.K. Rowling's latest detective thriller to J.D. Salinger's "Nine Stories." The battle lasted for months. Hachette author Stephen Colbert flipped the bird to Amazon, right on camera. Amazon suggested that frustrated customers might try buying books elsewhere.

You could call the resolution happy, and open-ended. The two sides agreed to a multiyear deal in mid-November and Hachette books were back in full for the holiday season. Amazon and Hachette each declared itself satisfied.

But it's hard to say what has changed. Douglas Preston, a Hachette author who became a leading Amazon critic, expressed a common view among writers when he told The Associated Press recently that the online retailer is "ruthless and willing to sanction books and hurt authors." Amazon's image may have suffered but it still controls some 40 percent of the market, by the estimate of major New York publishers, and still has a hold on those who say they fear it.

James Patterson, a Hachette author who has donated more than \$1 million to independent sellers and worried that Amazon might put them out of business, said in a recent interview that he likes to shop at the Classic Bookshop near his home in Palm Beach, Florida.

"And I do a little bit (of shopping) online," he added. Amazon?

"I do a little bit online," he repeated, then said of Amazon.

"I do understand where they're coming from."

Here are other highlights from 2014:

YESTERDAY'S NEWS: Many of the big fiction books of 2014 were not published in 2014: An Oprah Winfrey pick, Sue Monk Kidd's "The Invention of Wings"; Donna Tartt's Pulitzer Prize-winning "The Goldfinch," a Hachette release so in demand that even Amazon left it alone; and a handful of novels helped by movie adaptations — Gillian Flynn's "Gone Girl," John Green's "The Fault in Our Stars" and Laura Hillenbrand's "Unbroken." Phil Klay's book of contemporary war stories, "Redeployment," won the National Book Award, but a people's prize for top literary hardcover of 2014 would likely go to a novel about World War II, Anthony Doerr's "All the Light We Cannot See," which has sold more than 180,000 copies,



This Wednesday, Nov. 19, 2014 file photo shows Jacqueline Woodson, winner of the National Book Award for Young People's Literature, attending the 65th Annual National Book Awards at Cipriani Wall Street in New York.

Associated Press

according to Nielsen BookScan, which tracks around 80 percent of sales.

ROCK STARS: Readers have been treating young adult writers like rock stars, which is better than how they've been treating rock stars — at least those of a certain age. At 48,000 copies, "One Direction: Who We Are: Our Official Autobiography" was more popular than the combined Nielsen sales for books by Carlos Santana, Joe Perry and Jerry Lee Lewis.

DIVERSITY: BookCon, a self-styled "pop culture" version of BookExpo America, launched in 2014 and imme-



This image released by 20th Century Fox shows Ben Affleck in a scene from "Gone Girl." The film, released in 2014, is based on the best-selling book by Gillian Flynn.

Associated Press

diately failed by only inviting white authors to speak. In response, a social media campaign was born, and a grassroots movement, We Need Diverse Books, soon followed. One of We Need Diverse Books' advisers is Jacqueline Woodson, who won the National Book Award for her young adult book "Brown Girl Dreaming." She also, quite unintentionally, helped raised a substantial

amount of money for the organization. After she won her prize, awards emcee Daniel Handler of "Lemony Snicket" fame made an awkward joke about watermelon that even Handler later acknowledged was racist. He apologized and eventually donated \$110,000 to WNDB. Woodson, a published author for nearly 25 years, sees the industry alternating between cycles of recognition

and neglect. Now, she believes, recognition is underway, citing Jason Reynolds and Aisha Saeed as among the promising young adult writers. Meanwhile, Woodson wants to get around to an adult book she's been meaning to write. "My plan for January is to get quiet again, and write."

GETTING PERSONAL (AND POLITICAL): Lena Dunham only begins the story. It was a good year for personal essays, including those that are more than personal, with acclaimed collections from Roxane Gay, Charles D'Ambrosio and Meghan Daum among others. Leslie Jamison, author of the best-selling "The Empathy Exams: Essays," wrote in a recent email that "readers are becoming increasingly drawn to forms of personal writing that also look outward at the world: that blend the revelations of memoir with the inquiries of journalism and criticism." □

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Saturday	Sizzling Santa's Cash Night \$2000 in cash prizes First drawing starts at 9pm
Sunday	4x Points 6pm - 9pm

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McCartney reflects on yesterday, today and tomorrow

HILLEL ITALIE

AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Sir Paul McCartney is 72, and only the wrinkles give his years away.

Interviewed recently at his midtown Manhattan office suite, he seems as boyish and light-footed as he was on stage decades ago for "The Ed Sullivan Show," his manner informal, his build slender and well suited for jeans and a form-fitting sweater. He's so young in his thoughts that he will dismiss the idea of a memoir as a project for his 70s, catch himself, and dismiss a book again as if time were still a distant bother.

Memories can be found in his otherwise bright and modern office, from a small black and white photo taken of him by his late wife, Linda, to the abstract paintings by his late friend Willem de Kooning. But he is here to promote the present, a score he completed for



In this Oct. 15, 2014 file photo, former Beatle Sir Paul McCartney performs in concert as part of his Out There tour at Philips Arena in Atlanta.
Associated Press

Destiny, a first-person shooter game for PlayStation and Xbox. The premise was intriguing partly because he is no more adept at video games than he is at reading sheet music (many rock stars can't), and because the closing song he wrote, the ballad "Hope for the Future," captures how he

looks upon the world.

"I thought, 'Seeing it's a shoot-em-up game, I will be the optimistic hope for the future,'" he says. "I will write something that sums up that side of the game." Writing songs on commission has been a pastime for McCartney since his years with the Beatles, when he

composed the soundtrack for the 1966 film "The Family Way." He likes the challenge of fitting a piece of music into a pre-existing narrative, comparing it to solving a crossword puzzle. One of his favorite tests was coming up with the theme song, a top five solo hit for McCartney, for the 1973 James Bond thriller "Live and Let Die."

"It's like 'Live and Let Die,' how the hell am I am going to write a song like that?" he says. "I can't change the title. I can't say I'm going to write a song, 'Live and Let Fish.' Then you sit around and go, 'OK, 'You used to say 'Live and let live' ...'" You work out a whole hypothesis."

McCartney doesn't think of himself as a personal writer in the tradition of his former collaborator, John Lennon. His songs often are less about his own life than about assuming a mood or identity. So he is as comfortable declaring "Hope for the Future" as he was confiding "I believe in yesterday," as likely to imagine a lonely old woman ("Eleanor Rigby") as to put in a word for "Silly Love Songs." At times he takes on social causes, or at least tries. Having written "Blackbird" for the civil rights movement in the '60s, he attempted a song about police killings in Ferguson, Missouri, and New York City.

"I was thinking recently about all these protests in New York and around the country. I thought it would be great to put something down about that, just to add my voice to the thousands of people walking in the streets," he says. "I thought it through and it just didn't come easily. I'm not giving up on it, but it didn't come easily, whereas some other emotions might come

easily to me."

While forever a Beatle in the hearts of millions, he keeps his mind open to all moments. He sends out tweets on occasion and texts his friends, although the fine points of Spotify are beyond him (that's what lawyers are for). Sam Smith is a favorite young singer, and McCartney recently attended a Jay-Z/Kanye West concert, found it "amazing" and praised their lyrics as "modern poetry."

McCartney makes frequent visits to his native Liverpool, where he helped found The Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts on the site of the school he and George Harrison attended as boys. And he keeps in close touch with family members and past associates, enjoying local gossip or joking with Beatles producer Sir George Martin. Loved ones speak to him from beyond. McCartney finds himself remembering his late father's pet expressions, like "Get stripped, you're on next," meaning asking a guest to take his coat off. While working on a song — the melodies come to him constantly — he might summon the spirit of Lennon.

"I imagine myself back into a room with John, and I'll think (about a lyric), 'Ugh, that's no good.' And I'll imagine him saying, 'No, can't do that.' So I'm using him as a sort of judge of what I'm doing," McCartney says.

History — the Beatles, England, childhood — follows him everywhere, whether to a White House party where young friends of the Obamas gushed like the kids of old, or a birthday party in Tokyo for his current wife, Nancy. The entertainment was Queen and Beatles tribute bands. □

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